

Yet, the teacher who has made any preparation for taking up his profession has not promised himself such slavery to convention while he was under training. He, too, has looked forward to escaping the "idols of the schoolroom." He, too, has intended to enliven the routine of learning and to substitute living instruction for skeletons of science, geography, or history. It must be admitted that many who are disappointed of their hopes learn to acquiesce submissively in their disappointment. They had expected to climb rocks and mountains with dangerous but exciting risks. They find themselves marching over loose sand in a windless, stifling atmosphere.

There is great need of keeping up the keenness of youth as time passes by, and the blunting effect of general society wears away its edge. Exceptional efforts are necessary to avoid the dull, flat, profitless condition of the teacher who has lost interest in his work. We cannot by thinking breathe the air of the mountain tops as we cross the low, long levels of the fens, but there are ways of keeping the thoughts up to a high working level.

The first point to insist on is the value of studying some educational classic. Different people will prefer different books, but having selected the one which you prefer, read it through once a year and keep it in hand as a *vade mecum*. There are very few books that have been really epoch making in educational studies. I should name Plato's "Republic," Bacon's Works, Rousseau's "Emile," and Pestalozzi's "Leonard and Gertrude." One or other of these should be read annually.

Secondly, every teacher should commence a new subject, if not every year, then every other year. It does not matter whether the new subject be a language, a science, or an art. The value of the new study is that it keeps the teacher's mind fresh and receptive of new facts, and it also helps him to sympathise with the difficulties of the learner.

There are few people who cannot, by a judicious use of opportunity, find means to get help in commencing new studies. Thus much I have to say about keeping keenness, and as a result of it, I believe that in after life pupils will say of their teacher as Margaret Fuller says of one of hers: "All the dreariness that had hitherto been associated with the schoolroom was gone; the things he taught us were a part of his life; it was no longer drudgery to learn."

T. G. ROOPER.

NATURE NOTE BOOKS.

YES, I know it is unwise to head my paper thus, if I wish it to receive the attention it deserves, for will you not impatiently turn over the pages and exclaim: "We know all about those already, those little details of teaching are but bubbles floating on the great sea of our education question, and we look to the students who are diligent enough to fill these pages for some of the divers' treasures." I dived for you, my dear girls, most honestly, but I confess not very far, for at the Conference this month I found myself frequently in deep waters and was obliged to hold on bravely to outward and visible things, obviously Nature note books, since twelve of them were being passed from hand to hand. A few halting commonplace sentences strung together on their behalf showed how much might have been said, but as there is no second chance of any oratorical display, I should like to make up for any injustice I perpetrated then in the pages of our little magazine. So please read and forgive.

Do you find that parents sometimes think the Nature work waste of time? Do not wonder at this; the reason is that they have not done anything of the kind themselves. You must begin at the beginning as a child does, before you can understand where the fascination lies, and there will be a few who never do understand, just as there are a few who do not care to play a musical instrument, or to write a story. Can you recall the intense satisfaction you felt as children when you had completed your first poem, or painted your first original picture? Ask the parents this, and if they answer yes, they ought to be able to find out the rest of the secret for themselves. For each of these books is (to a certain degree) a true picture of the mind of its creator; there is no need to read between the lines, for open on the pages lies a character, wide or narrow, lofty or low, self-reliant or dependent it stands unconsciously but truthfully revealed. It may be argued that this is a drawback, and that such dangerous mirrors had best be turned with their faces to the wall. By all means, if the satisfaction were only for those who look over the shoulder; but as a matter of fact it is the owner who reaps the benefit, and if he is anything of an artist feels the most gratification. The reason is simple. He has found a means of self-expression through the most beautiful medium in the world, that of Nature. Every human being has a desire to leave his "foot-prints on the sands of time," not because he is thinking of posterity but because he likes to see himself

outside himself; because he must make his mark—and until he has made it he will be unhappy. How many people are there who have drifted into hysteria and melancholia merely because they had no opportunity for the exercise of this right and natural desire? Some paint pictures, some compose, some sing songs, write poems, novels, anything, some talk, and some only ignorantly, wistfully, "sweep a room." Never mind, it is their *Ego*—all they have to give, and to give truthfully is highest art. You will smile as you read and say, "What rubbish." I know more than one who would, but I would only insist the more that since truth and art are one, the note book, being a true expression, is a sweet and flowery road to the great goal. Having then established its right to exist, we will consider one or two minor points.

The note books should be the agents of Nature, the great teacher who gives her lessons best from her own lips. Therefore, I should not in the perfect book have anything but what the writer has observed, and his own remarks thereon. There ought to be no copying either from dictation or book. Unless every observation has come through the senses of the person who notes it, the book as a work of art is not, and the lesson has not been learnt. Do you agree with me in saying that to allow dictation or even resumés of a natural history lesson is really a perversion of the original purpose of the Nature note book? If, however, these things must be, see that they have one part all to themselves, and are not mixed up promiscuously with the child's own work. Sometimes the children are slow at noticing or putting into words what they do notice, and then it is as well to help them, expecting them to bring before you every day some one thing they have remarked out of doors. It will soon become a habit and then the spur can be removed.

With regard to the brush-work; at the very first it may have to be left out altogether, but after a little practice the drawing from Nature might begin, and though it may spoil the arrangement of the book it is better that the first illustrations should be on separate paper, which can be inserted or not, as they are worthy or unworthy, because in the latter event (a likely one) if the drawing is on a page and cannot be removed the poor little artist is discouraged by a perpetual reminder of failure.

But you all know these things as well as I, and it is greedy to take up the space that others are so ready to fill. Only in conclusion let me remind you when you are tempted to think that time could be better employed what an endless source of pleasure our own books were to us at Ambleside.

F. R.

THOUGHTFULNESS:

AN ATTITUDE OF SOUL.

THE Boy Jesus said: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"—*S. Luke ii., 43, 50, R.V. marg.*

Here is another aspect of Thoughtfulness to which I think we, as teachers, may give much care and thought ourselves, in the training up of our older girls and boys. We must all, I feel sure, cordially agree with the idea in F.R.'s delightful paper in our last magazine, viz., that children, especially the little ones, should not be encouraged to become preternaturally thoughtful; but as they come to years of discretion, and one feels the need of an *inspiring idea of the loftiest type* wherewith to fire the young souls in our charge, is it not in keeping with the tender thoughtfulness of our Master that we find just what we need in the story of His own all-perfect example? Only once is the veil lifted which shrouds from a too curious gaze the quiet years between the infancy and manhood of our Divine Lord. The little, happy, holy child Who has clung with winsome loving ways to the holy Mother; Who has learned from her lips and at her knee the wondrous stories and teachings so precious to His nation—to Him there comes, with growing stature and increasing wisdom, some forecast of the great life-work before Him, and with all the energy of His boyhood He strengthens Himself for the conflict, assuming that attitude of soul which reveals itself in the question, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" How well we know, even when the "hour was at hand" and He knew with all the intensity of a knowledge at once human and divine, the full bitterness of the cup He was about to drink, that He never swerved from this calm attitude of soul, this loyalty to His Father's business, but "set His face *steadfastly* to go to Jerusalem!"

And as the dear boys and girls shoot up "as the young plants"; as their knowledge daily grows "from more to more," do we not feel that we need the stimulus of some great idea to put before them—something that shall make them feel that they *want* to grow day by day more and more like unto Him who is to be the Guide of their youth, as He has been the Protector of their childhood? Something that shall fire them,